

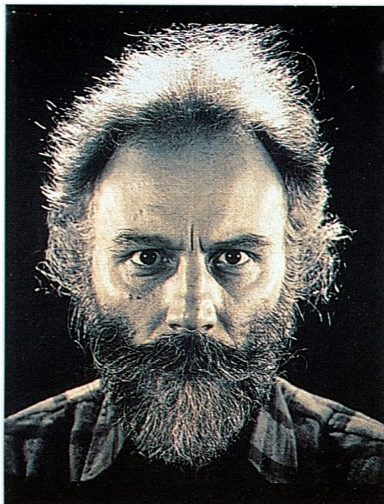
Chuck Close

White Cube London

Walking into White Cube we become witnesses to the trust that Chuck Close's sitters have in him. The suite of ink jet photographic portraits are detailed explorations of the topology of the human face. But there is a familiarity about the work; these are faces that we have seen before. Each one of the eight images has been painted - often more than once - on an enormous canvas by Close, who recycles his images, shuttling between photography and painting. Photography has always been the starting point of his work. The portraits are taken on a 20x24 large format Polaroid camera, then scanned in colour onto Somerset paper. The resulting black and white inkjet prints have a profound tonal depth and sensuality, seeming to possess the quality of detailed drawings. Large in scale, mounted on aluminium and unframed, the hyper real visual intimacy is maintained by consistent, familiar, photographic parameters. The rigorous posing of the figure, the shallow depth of field that derives from his use of the Polaroid, and the elimination of background and gesture, allows a scrupulous examination of every nuance of expression. The proximity of the camera engenders a slight blurring of the features, both nearest and farthest from the lens.

These are not photographs taken at unguarded moments. It is not necessary as Close says to "crank up the image", the information is embedded in the planes and surfaces of the visage. Alex Katz's face or the late Roy Lichtenstein are already in the public domain, as is Close's self portrait. Lucas Samaras's svengali gaze, with its slightly sepia tint, looks strangely magical, consistent with his reputation as a theatrical multimedia wizard.

These meticulous images allow us to indulge our mirror fixation by transferring it to a surrogate. Close has found nothing that interests him more than portraiture. He has come a full circle, making work with machines that resemble his grey scale paintings of the early seventies. This is wholly consistent with his aesthetic of symmetry and repetition. The exhibition is not overwhelming, but rather meditative, offering tranquillity in the midst of an orgy of scopophilia. *Jean Wainwright*



Chuck Close
Lucas, 1995 Inkjet print on Somerset paper on Aluminium
Courtesy of White Cube